

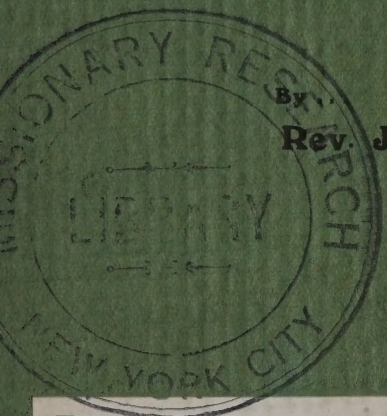
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Bios

Mary H. Steen.

The Story of a Happy Life.

By

Rev. J. Sinclair Stevenson, M.A.



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Rev. J. Sinclair Stevenson, M.A.



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MARY H. STEEN.

THE STORY OF A HAPPY LIFE.

CHAPTER I. PREPARATION.



MARY HARVEY STEEN was born in Edinburgh on the 4th of December, 1873. Her father, John Carmichael Steen, had come to Scotland when quite a young man, and was engaged in the profession of teaching,

to which he gave his whole life ; but he was an Irishman, born in Donaghadee, and educated in Belfast, and his daughter, though born and largely brought up in Edinburgh, was an Irish girl through and through. Mr. Steen came to Edinburgh in the year 1858, and, as Head-master of the Park Place Institution, exercised for nearly thirty years the educational oversight of a large number of girls. He was a born teacher, and his daughter certainly inherited this gift in no small degree.

Mary was a naturally religious child, and her mother gratefully remembers in this connection the influence of an earnest Christian nurse. When still quite a child she gave her heart to the Saviour, and her love for her Lord grew and developed as the years went by.

“ One morning, before she had begun to go to school, she ran with a little brother into her mother’s room, and picking up a slip of paper that she found on the dressing-table, she handed it to her brother, saying, ‘ Read that.’ He was as ignorant of the art of reading as she was, so he replied, ‘ I can’t.’ ‘ Then,’ she said, ‘ listen, I’ll read what it says ; it just says, ‘ Jesus loves me *very* much.’ ”

“ When she was about eight years old, she said to her mother one day, ‘ What could I do to help poor children ? ’ and her mother replied, ‘ Well, dear, you had better be a missionary.’ ”

From her earliest years she gave proof of that delightfully sunny nature that one came in after-life to associate with every memory of her. When she was little more than a baby, other children used to come to her nurse and ask her to lend them Mary to make them happy, so full of sunshine was the little life even then. When she was between six and seven she had a very severe attack of diphtheria, and her life was despaired of. The child herself must have had some knowledge of how ill she was, for she spoke eagerly of seeing two little baby sisters who had died long before she was born, and showed no fear of death, but, thanks no doubt to her patience and obedience, and largely to the earnest prayer that went up

for a child so widely loved, she was spared to do a great work for her Master.

When Mary was twelve, her father died. Her mother returned to Ireland the following year, and settled in Belfast, where her daughter went to school. Two years later, however, Mary went back to her old school in Edinburgh for another two years, and being an enthusiastic as well as an able student, she won many prizes, and in her last year carried off the senior gold medal as the most distinguished pupil of the school. After a short time at home she went for six months to study in Germany.

The next four years were spent in most useful and happy apprenticeship in religious work of different kinds: she had a class in Sunday school, visited the children in the workhouse, and helped with special interest and pleasure in the working of a "Missionary Endeavour Band," which she had herself been the means of starting in connection with Fitzroy Avenue Church, Belfast.

It was at this time that the desire to work in the mission field, which had been in her mind from childhood, took definite shape. At one time she had had some thought of taking a medical course, and, with this end in view, attended the extern department of the hospital for a while, and what she learnt there about dressing wounds was doubtless of great benefit to her in her subsequent orphanage work in India. Eventually, in September, 1896, she took an eighteen months' course at the Missionary Training Home, known as "The Olives," in London. She must have

been one of the most popular students that ever took their training there, yet nothing seemed able to spoil her. She was a favourite with all, and was finally raised to the post of "Head Deaconess." She was never too busy to enter into the special interests or difficulties of a fellow-student, and her presence was a constant inspiration for any work.

To a friend a little younger than herself, who was at the Olives with her, she wrote :—

"What we each want is to live so near to the Lord that we can't help bringing others nearer to Him. Yet we must not expect them all to see things as we see them, but if the Lord has shown us anything let us live up to it, and speak out about it, and not be ashamed, while at the same time we don't thrust it upon others. I think this next term is the best one for talks with the girls. There is the garden and all that, and I want you to think of these times as God-given opportunities. I am only telling you all this, because I didn't realize it at first, and I don't want you to have any wasted times. I shall have a lot of knocking about this summer, going for short visits. You will pray sometimes for me, won't you? That wherever I am I may glorify Him. I have not been telling you much of what I have been doing since I came home. I long sometimes to be doing more definite work, and yet I know that to live a Christ-like life at home is just as much witnessing for Him."

Another time she wrote :—

"Now I want to try and talk to you about what you said about the Victoria Laundry, and speaking, etc. You must not ever allow things like that to worry you, not that

I think you are doing that, but I know some girls are terribly apt to worry over speaking at meeting, etc. Then another thing is, don't think the Lord is not using you, and will not use you, because you don't speak. He is doing so, I'm sure, if we live close to Him, and seek to please Him in all we do ; our lives will witness ; they can't help it, and I think we should be willing to speak for God, if He gives the message, but not otherwise. By His giving the message you must not expect to have the words, but His Holy Spirit will put the thoughts into your mind. What we need is to be empty of ourselves, and to be at His feet, to be filled by Him. Don't you think we sometimes won't speak at meetings, or to others, because we are afraid we won't do it as well as someone else. I know there was a lot of horrid pride in me ; we might call it shyness, but it's not that really : it's pride in me anyway."

And another time :—

" I had a lovely swim yesterday morning with my two cousins, and I did enjoy it. The sun was shining so warmly and brightly, although it was early. I am so glad that — has been a help to you. I think she is a grand girl so really ' cut and out,' and taught of God. We need to know more about the Holy Spirit. When we must learn what the Holy Spirit is willing to do for us, and can do, and then let Him do it I think our whole life becomes changed. I know I count it as one of the chief turning points in my life, when I realized what the baptism of the Holy Spirit was, and it does not end there, because every day there is more to learn "



MISS MARY H. STEEN.

Miss Steen looked back in after years to these months at "The Olives" with great joy and thankfulness.

India was the country she always felt drawn to, and accordingly it was for work in India that she applied to the Women's Missionary Association in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

The Committee appointed her to our mission field in Gujarat, and she sailed in November, 1898.

Those who were present at her farewell meeting are not likely to forget the few words she then spoke. "It was so splendid," says one friend; "the look in her eyes was like a light shining straight from heaven."

She describes her experiences on the voyage and after landing with all the zest of one interested in everything that goes on, in a series of charmingly simple home letters.

The journey gave her an ever-welcome opportunity of fellowship with other missionaries. After referring to the usual daily Bible reading on board, she says:—"I have not told you of our prayer meeting which is held in our cabin. You know the size of the cabins, and yet in our three-berthed cabin we have as many as 8, 9, or 10

people who come together at 4-30 p.m. for a short prayer meeting. We all enjoy it very much, although certainly it is sometimes very hot."

Those who remember Miss Steen's strength of character will be glad to find that she had to acquire it like anybody else—from the only Source where true strength is to be found.

"It was a great business transshipping at Aden. Miss Beatty and I quickly made out our cabin, and were glad to find we had it to ourselves; but you can imagine my feelings when we saw it was simply swarming with cockroaches. I did not know what to do, and hardly dared to put a foot inside: they seemed to be everywhere. I could think of nothing but these horrid beasties, and was so miserable that I was secretly reduced to tears. Well, I saw I must not go on like that, so that evening up on deck I prayed about it, and asked the Lord to take away my fear and make me not mind them. That night going to bed there were plenty of them about, and even one under my pillow, and yet I didn't seem to mind; and He did more than I asked or thought of asking, because now there aren't nearly so many of them as there were."

A little later, after she had landed in India, she felt grateful for having got over this most natural horror so early and so thoroughly, for she writes:—"I'm not minding the insects and other beasties at all, and there are a good many of them. A squirrel ran through the bungalow to-day, and mice are seen pretty often. Then there are all kinds of insects. I feel sure that I was allowed to come

in a cockroachy cabin that I might have a big fight about insects and get real deliverance from them. If I had come to India minus those cockroaches I might never have got such deliverance, because meeting them singly I might not have thought it worth while praying about. So I can really thank for the cockroaches now."

CHAPTER II. ANAND.

MISS STEEN landed on Saturday, the 26th of November, 1898, and was met in Bombay by her sister, a nurse in the U.F. Mission Hospital at Nagpur. After spending a quiet Sunday, when she was able to renew acquaintance with friends who had preceded her to India at the Missionary Settlement and elsewhere, she accompanied her sister to Nagpur, and stayed with her till just after Christmas. But no sooner had she arrived than she asked that



THE ORPHANAGE.

a pandit (Indian teacher) might be found for her, thus early laying the foundation of her remarkable knowledge of Gujarati.

Miss Steen had been appointed to Anand, where the Zenana Mission had not been long at work, but, as the bungalow was not yet quite ready for occupation, she went first to Ahmedabad, and spent three weeks on tour with a fellow-missionary, an experience which the nature of her work in all the following years gave her scarcely any opportunity to repeat.

Miss Steen's first year was naturally given to learning the language, but, after her first year's examination had been passed with flying colours, she was put in charge of the Girls' Orphanage. At that time there were not more than 65 children there, some of them boarders who had learnt as far as their village school could take them, and others the orphaned children, mostly of Christian parents. But the year 1899 brought one of the most disastrous famines that the century had known, and before long the Orphanage was full to overflowing. Miss Steen was never more in her element than among girls, big and little, and the rare opportunity she now had was used to the full. Extracts from letters she wrote to various children's missionary bands or to the children's pages of missionary periodicals will give some idea of how the work appealed to her :—

“ I think you really would have laughed last Sunday if you could have seen little Rumia—the orphanage baby—walking home from church, holding up her dress in front.

She had just got a new dress, and for the first time was wearing it, but it had been made rather long, so her little fat dimpled hand had to hold it up in front that she might not trip and fall down. A very quaint little picture she made, walking along in her bright pink frock, with her little dark face, hands, and feet appearing. But her face was all beams and smiles. It did not matter to her that the dress was too long : it was her nice new frock, and that was all she cared about.

“ But what is she doing to-day ? Her good new frock is carefully folded away till next Sunday, and to-day she is in her ordinary or working clothes, and she *is* working. Little Rumia is really helping to build the new Orphanage. She has a small basket on her head, with two or three bricks in it, and these she is bringing over to put on the pile of bricks which will be used in building the walls.

“ Talking of this building makes us think of another building of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the “ Chief Corner Stone,” and we are the ‘ living stones.’ The Lord is building a spiritual house, and He wants stones for that house ; and you and I are stones, aren’t we ? Yes, all who love our dear Lord Jesus are stones in that house ; and now I want you to ask the Lord that this little Rumia may herself be a living stone in the Lord’s house.

“ When I was at home and thought of the Orphanages in India for little girls, I used to think of a building something like ‘ Shamrock Lodge,’ and imagined the nice rooms, tables, chairs, lockers, and neat little beds with white covers. But when I came to India I saw that my idea had not been very correct.

“In this Orphanage, in Anand, there are no beds at all; the children just sleep on the floor! Then as to bedclothes, they are not needed in this season of the year. Even in the cold season a single rug is sufficient.

“The other evening we were invited to come and share their evening meal. How different that was from anything one would see at home. They had no spoons, nor knives and forks, as you have. They had no chairs to sit on, nor nice tables with clean cloths on them. They sat on the floor, and each child had a round flat dish in front of her with a large heap of rice and curry on it, and this she ate with her fingers!

“You may not have much money to send, but you can pray for these children, can't you? And after all prayer is *far* more important than a whole lot of money. We want so very much these children to give their hearts to the Lord Jesus while they are quite young so that they may belong to Him all their lives, and not let Satan have any part of them. So now will you pray hard about this, and don't just pray one day, but every day.

“A little girlie once asked if the faces of Indian children turned white when they gave their hearts to God. No, the colour of their faces doesn't change; but they are just like you and me in this way—that before they belong to the Lord they have got black hearts, but when you or they come to Him He washes away all sins and makes those black hearts perfectly clean and white in the precious 'blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin.'”



BROTHER AND SISTER.

Two of the Tiny Orphans.

Miss Steen did not regard letter-writing of this sort as in any sense waste of a missionary's time. She says :—" I shall have a good deal of writing to do in connection with the Orphanage. When children are taken up, their supporters like to hear about them. Then acknowledgments must not be just *mere* acknowledgments, but one must write a little more. I quite realize this is all part of the work of the Lord, and I think it is a

very important part too. It goes to one's heart to think of girls collecting their money and going without things to send money out here. I pray very often that I may realize what it means for many who give, and I try to be economical and not spend money on anything unnecessary."

The following extract from a letter of a newly arrived fellow-missionary gives a picture of her busy day :—" Mary Steen studies with her pandit from eight to nine every morning, and goes to the Orphanage from nine to ten to see that things are going on all right. . . . After breakfast she has the Orphanage girls over at the Mission House—

three sets of girls, one after the other—to teach them Scripture, reading, etc., and then a number come for sewing. That occupies her till three o'clock, or later; she studies from four to five, and goes to the Orphanage again from five to six. She then perhaps goes across to the other Mission House, or takes some little recreation. Usually she has been at the Orphanage till much later. The rest of the evening is free for sewing or reading." Not much cutting to waste in this programme! And yet her friends knew that after saying good-night she would often sit up for an hour or two doing her correspondence, or making up other arrears of work.

She herself gives a pleasant description of her work in the Orphanage at this time in a letter written to some friends who had undertaken the support of one of her little girls:

"The girls in the Orphanage do all their own work—grinding, baking, washing, filling water from the well, etc. Your little girl and others so young cannot do such hard work, so they sweep out a room, or do some other light work.

"You ask when and how these children become independent. Well, really, the answer is—by marriage. All girls, I may say, get married, and they do so at a comparatively early age. If our girls are clever we send them to College, where they are trained as teachers. Others are trained as Bible-women, and in this way they become independent; but these trained teachers and Bible-women are always, or nearly always, married women too. So when home people undertake to support a child,

it generally means they will be responsible for her until she gets married—probably at the age of 18.

“I am very happy in my work here, and thoroughly



enjoy working amongst the Orphanage girls. We have a large family in the Orphanage—100 girls of all ages from 5 to 17 or 18. It is responsible work, so I know you will

pray for me that the Lord may use me to lead many of these girls to know Him and love Him as their Saviour."

Miss Steen's work was not, however, limited to the charge of the Orphanage. She could not keep away when there was teaching of any kind to be done, and it must have been sheer joy to her when the opportunity came to teach some of the Christian women and girls in the villages, and to combine with this a little directly evangelistic work.

"During the past year I have been doing a new bit of work, which I have enjoyed greatly, and which I want to tell you about. On Tuesday afternoons I go out by train to Bhalaj, and have a class for some of the women and girls there. They have gone through the first year's course for Bible-women. The class is from four to five p.m., and after it two or three come with me, and we go to one of the neighbouring villages and have a little meeting for Hindus or Musalmans. When we come back from that I always go to the house of one of our Christian women, and have some native refreshment, served and eaten in native style, and then it is time to go home again by train. I get back here about eight p.m. On Wednesdays I have another class of the same kind here in the bungalow. It is hardly worthy the name of class, as there are only two in it; but they are so keen to learn and so interested, it is a great pleasure to teach them. After this class is over we go out to some village near here. It is so different speaking here from speaking at home. There is there so much knowledge to go on, but here there is none. At home we know to a certain extent what appeals to people, and we know

what will touch them ; here everything is different—it sometimes feels like speaking to a great wall.

“ But there are always some who appear interested and understand a little, and in any case we rely on the promise, ‘ My word . . . shall not return unto Me void.’ ”

Sometimes in India, as elsewhere, things do not go just as we expect, the way we behave under these trifling annoyances is often a by no means trifling indication of character. Once Miss Steen, having gone to Bhalaj as usual, found something wrong with her horse when about to return. “ It was too hot to think of walking, or to go in the slow old bullock-cart they had nearly got ready for me before I could say no, and I thought of all my bairns in the Orphanage waiting for me. The only thing to be done was to send a messenger in to Anand to let them know what had happened, and go back myself by the mid-day train ; but it was only ten o’clock as yet, and the train did not go till two. An old orphanage girl gave me a nice breakfast of wheaten bread, rice, and vegetables ; and then, hearing that a goods train often passed through in the morning I started off for the station on the chance of a seat in the brake-van. However, the train did not come this time, so I walked into the station-master’s room, seated myself at his table, possessed myself of his pen, ink, and blotting paper, and set to work to make out the summary of a tract which I had wanted to do for some time, but had found it hard to get an uninterrupted bit of time. I felt as if people would think I must be the station-mistress, so much at home did I make myself. I

had a few conversations with some men who were hanging about the station. One said, 'If I come to work in your offices what salary would you give me?' and another inquired, 'What salary do you get?' and so the time passed away quickly, and the train came in, and I was soon back again in Anand, four hours later than I had expected."

The Rev. Pitambar Shamji, who was at that time stationed at Anand as catechist, gives some vivid recollections of Miss Steen in those days.

"When she first came to Anand," he tells us, "though not yet able to speak the language, the love of Christ seemed so to bubble up in her and to shine on her face that at the very first interview one got the impression, without a word on her part, that the marks of Christ had penetrated deeply into her character. She had at this time three kinds of work to do—the charge of the Orphanage, evangelistic work, and study: and of the three study came first. After passing her examinations with distinction, she took every opportunity of conversing with the people, and never ceased trying to perfect her Gujarati. She would take little children on her knee and learn from them, and she would go and visit the Christian women in their homes and talk to them pleasantly on all sorts of subjects, and so learn household words. If she heard a new word she would smilingly ask to have it repeated over and over again until she knew it, or she would write it down on her cuff or the skirt of her dress. In the Orphanage she was just like a loving mother to the children: she would superintend their cooking, not only watching them at it,

but going to other peoples' houses to see for herself how it ought to be done ; she was very particular about the children's clothes, insisting on the most scrupulous cleanliness and tidiness ; she was constantly over at the Orphanage, chatting to the girls and helping them ; she also kept a very strict watch over their conduct ; she was never tired of teaching them, and an industrious girl was sure of praise, but the idle ones she would encourage and persuade till they, too, became more thoughtful ; when she had occasion to punish it was not lightly, but she always tried to follow up the punishment by a loving talk which would make the child want to do better in future. She took great pains with the teachers in the school, and was always trying to improve their work. When any of her girls fell sick it caused her the greatest anxiety, and many of them could tell stories of her endless kindness to them at such times, and how she did all the nursing herself. She loved to go in and play with the girls and enjoy all sorts of fun with them, so that it is no wonder that when she went on furlough she left them in tears.

“ If she was to be seen at her best at the Orphanage work, she was none the less enthusiastic over her work with the Bible-women. They delight to tell how, when she went out with them to preach, it was with the same joy with which one would go to a wedding. She liked to have prayer with the women on the way to the village and on the way back. When she was speaking to the village women, she would constantly intersperse phrases like : isn't that so ? which would attract the women



CHRISTIAN MOTHERS—BIBLE
WOMEN.

to believe what she said, and by calling the older women 'mother,' and using similar affectionate names, she would seldom fail to win their hearts, so that in at least one case she was able to win over a whole family to Christ.

"It was the same with her relations with the Christians, and many of them can tell stories of how completely she threw herself into all that concerned their welfare, sympathising with their sorrows and never weary of trying to find means to help them. We truly felt that we had in her a noble example of what a servant of Christ should be."

When first she came to India she had the name of Jesus pasted on her watch, so that whenever she wished to see the time she might be reminded of the presence of her Saviour. Later on she found she was able to do without this reminder, and indeed anyone who knew her, even

slightly, could not but feel that she constantly realized the nearness of Christ.

CHAPTER III. BORSAD.

THE year 1904 was spent on furlough in Ireland. There was a Missionary Conference held in Belfast in October, at which Miss Steen was one of the speakers, and her address made a great impression, and was remembered long afterwards. In January, 1905, she returned to India, and this time was allocated to Borsad.

Borsad is one of the oldest, as well as one of the most interesting, stations in the territory of the Irish Mission. The district, of which it is the centre, was the first in Gujarat to show a settled Christian Church, and many of the problems that have from time to time had to be faced and solved in connection with the Church and Mission were settled there. Borsad is only about a dozen miles, as the crow flies, from Anand, where Miss Steen's first term of service had been spent, but, not being on the railway, it has all the charm of being absolutely in the country. From the missionary point of view, it is one of the most interesting places in India, containing, as it does, almost every possible form of mission work, and fulfilling in many ways the ideal of the missionary communities of the ancient Irish Church. There is a flourishing Christian congregation, with a large church. Then there is Kashi-wàdi, the first of the Christian agricultural colonies, for which the Irish Mission in India is famous, and the surrounding district contains many more on the same model.

Medical Mission work is represented by the Mary M'George Hospital and Dispensary for Women, and educational work by an Anglo-vernacular and a number of vernacular Mission Schools. The indefatigable enthusiasm of the Rev. Robert Henderson, who, with scarcely a break, has ruled Borsad for nearly a score of years, has added to the older features of the place, besides new churches and school-houses and whole Christian villages, a most efficient industrial school. There they will weave you cloth and make it up into a suit of clothes, and there you can get a good pair of boots. The beautiful carved doors of the new church, made by the boys of the school from their own designs, prove that true art has not died out in Gujarat.

The famine of 1899-1900 left its mark on Borsad, as elsewhere, in large numbers of famine orphans, both boys and girls, and it was of these last that Miss Steen found herself put in charge when she returned to India in 1905.

It was arranged that Miss Steen should take charge of the older girls, numbering over 100, and give the charge of the babies to one of her fellow-workers in exchange for the oversight of the Christian women in Brookhill, the largest and most important of the Christian villages, of which Borsad is the Mother Church. In her first report of the Borsad work, she says :—

“ It was strange, in the beginning of February, after my return from furlough, to begin Orphanage work again, and yet not to know the name even of one of the inhabitants of this Orphanage. The daily routine of Orphanage life is much the same wherever the Orphanage may be

situated, but just as each individual girl's countenance is specially and only her own, so each individual has a special character, special gifts and graces, special failings. We who have charge of Orphanages wish not merely to teach the girls, or to see that the wheels run smoothly, but our desire is 'that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.' To this end we seek to get into close personal touch with each orphan, to understand her character, and in every possible way to help her on to the heavenly road, and thus to realize that in this life all we do, down to the tiniest trifle, should be done to the glory of God "

Writing a few months after her arrival at this new station, she says :—" I am feeling quite settled down in Borsad now, and very happy with the large family of girls here. I've got hold of all their names, and am beginning to know something about each one. The girls here are always asking me if Anand is nicer than Borsad, and if the girls in the Anand Orphanage are better than the Borsad girls. They would be deeply hurt if I said I preferred Anand or the Anand girls, so I generally tell them that both places are charming (which is quite true), and that there never were such good, nice girls as the Anand and Borsad ones, and then they are perfectly satisfied "

In the report already referred to she writes :—

" We are often struck with what might be called the religious-mindedness of these girls. Again and again, in all our Orphanages, they will deny themselves some special treat in order to give money to the Sunday or some other collection. In time one almost gets accustomed to the

angelic qualities of these children. In order to possess a hymnbook or a Bible they will learn without a mistake several chapters out of the Bible ; or, in addition to their housework, and in their playtime, they will most cheerfully and joyfully do wearisome weeding in the hot, glaring sun. Indeed once, in an excess of zeal, three small girls were observed weeding away at night, aided by the light of a tiny, smoky lamp ! And as talking after 9 p.m. is against rules, these three little dark figures went on silently with their work until they were told to go to bed.

“ Whilst mentioning their angelic qualities, we do not want to hide the fact that in many there are still qualities very far from angelic. In many ways they compare well with home children, but in other ways they are far, far behind them. The want of truth in many, the light way in which they regard sin, their want of moral backbone, make us realise the importance and responsibility of working amongst them, and also the joy of telling them that the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save, and that ‘ He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.’ ”

And later :—

“ The children are, on the whole, very well behaved, and are a happy, healthy, noisy crowd. Work amongst them is, I think, quite the *happiest work one could have to do*. My only regret now is that I can’t spend my whole time with the girls. The responsibility of having the care of this large family is no small matter ; and when the superintendence of other work has to be crowded into the

day, one feels sorry to have to curtail the time spent with the girls, which at best is little enough where there are so many children."

And again :—

" Every week I have classes for the girls who wish to be baptized and for those who wish to become communicants. I never ask them to join these classes, it is entirely voluntary, but the classes are always well and regularly attended. It is an especial pleasure to teach the candidates for the Lord's Supper, they are so delightfully in earnest and keen to learn and understand all they can. That the candidates for baptism are not all so eager to learn is explained, I think, by the fact that there lurks in a good many minds the thought that they *ought* to be baptized—they are old enough now, or have learnt enough, or their compeers have been baptized, so they should be too. About being admitted to the Lord's Supper it seems quite different ; those who join are older, and perhaps understand more really ; but certainly I find it true that they learn with much more zest and earnestness, and seem to have a deeper and truer love for our Lord and Saviour.

A letter, written about this time to a Mission Band at home, gives a vivid idea of this girl-lover in the midst of the girls she loved.

" You will want to know about my work and surroundings here, so I must try and tell you something about them, and hope, if you know more and realize more of what it is all like, we shall have more of your help by prayer and deepened sympathy and interest.

"I am sitting in my own room at present, so I shall just tell you a little about that. I have a nice comfortable room built so as to get as much breeze as possible, which



NEW SKIRTS AND JACKETS.

is essential in this hot land. Underneath my bedroom is the class-room, and there all day long I have classes

of various kinds, or else interviews and chats with individual girls. There is a small verandah outside my bedroom, and, standing on this verandah, I can get a good view of the Orphanage, and often at night I go and stand on this verandah, and, with the orphanages in sight, pray very specially for all the dear inhabitants. I must explain to you that there are two Orphanages for girls here—one, which is quite close to the bungalow, mostly for the small tots, and the big Orphanage, which isn't very far away either, where all the big girls live. In the big Orphanage we have at present 113, and in the small 83, and we have one baby not a month old boarded with a Christian woman, so that my family numbers 197, which isn't bad for one mother. I sometimes tell them (in Gujarati, of course) about the poor woman who lived in a shoe and had so many children she didn't know what to do ! Since I came back to India after furlough I have got pale and thin again, as we mostly all do in this country ; the girls are quite distressed about this, and sometimes ask me, ' Do we give you so much trouble that you grow thin ? ' And one Sunday two girls brought me their share of melted butter, which is their Sunday treat, and said, ' Eat this and then you will grow fat again.' They are extremely nice, affectionate girls, though, as you can understand, they are not all equally good ; still, on the whole, I must say they behave very well and are very obedient. They are all ages and sizes, from 2 or 3 to 18 or 19. When at home I used to try and remind the people that all our orphans are not little boys and girls, and now I want to remind

you again that a great many of the girls and boys are quite young men and women. The little ones are very jolly, and one loves working amongst them and loving and petting, playing with and training them, but one's real work—and



the most interesting far—is amongst the bigger girls. All the little tots are mothered by big girls, and it is simply wonderful to see the untiring affection and care which these bigger girls give to the little ones, no matter how troublesome they may be.

"It is a great business getting them married, when it comes to be time for that. At first I felt very bashful over the business, but now I am getting more hardened and accustomed to it. Just to-day I got a note from a shy young man asking for a certain girl, and I dare say that match will come off some time soon. On the third of next month we are going to have five of the girls married, so that will be a great day. All these five girls are busy now sewing their trousseaux; not a very complicated or expensive business in this country.

"I must tell about one girl we have who is so stupid. Poor thing, she is a bit deaf, and that and the fact that she doesn't know the right answer makes her possibly extra nervous; but indeed it is a regular 'blessing tester' (do you know that Salvation Army expression?) to teach her. Last time I taught her I said, 'If we want to know more about the Lord Jesus, what should we do?' I meant her to say we should read the Bible and learn all about Him there, but anyway her answer was: 'In heaven.' I tried to explain again; still the same answer. Over again I explain; this goes on for a good fifteen minutes, and finally I rejoice when it dawns on her and she says: 'In the Bible.' Then I asked her to give me a verse containing the Gospel invitation. Knowing that the Bible was the correct answer for the last question, she now again tells me: 'The Bible.' Perhaps I say to myself: 'That was too difficult,' so I ask her a few as simple questions as possible, and sometimes she may answer correctly, but more often hopelessly wide of the mark. This girl, all the

same, in spite of her stupidity, is a good, decent, quiet, hardworking young woman. I believe, as far as she understands, she is a Christian and a true follower of the Lord Jesus. I teach this one girl by herself, as she would take nothing in in a class, but every day I have large classes for the others. They are bright girls, and give good answers.

“Next Sunday is to be our Quarterly Baptism and Communion Service, so yesterday 22 of the girls came to me, saying they were anxious to be baptized. They have been thinking about it for some time past now, and I believe most of them are in downright earnest, but I do want to be as sure as ever I possibly can that they are on the Lord’s side truly before allowing them to be baptized, so I had a chat with each one by herself—a real heart-to-heart talk, not to find out what they knew, but to find out if the Lord Jesus was their personal Saviour, ‘a living, bright reality’ to them, and were they anxious to seek to please Him by living and doing all to His glory. I felt fully satisfied about nine or ten of them, and, though I believe the others are in earnest, I have advised them to wait another three months before coming forward. As time after time girls come forward and profess their faith in the Lord Jesus, and as, living in daily touch with them I see the reality of their profession, I just praise God that He allows me to be a fellow-worker with Him in such glorious work, so full of encouragements.

“I could go on writing easily enough, but an extra letter like this means time stolen from bed, and in a busy life, where one’s working day begins at about 5-30 a.m.,

and seems hardly ever finished before 8 p.m., that means unfitness for the morrow. I shall say good-night now, and perhaps tell you some more about the precious lambs another time. I am so glad the Lord has told me, 'Feed My lambs.' "

A letter, written nearer the end of her time at Borsad, gives a good idea of how she lived among her girls, and how her every thought was of bringing them into touch with Christ. By this time she had sole charge of both sections of the Girls' Orphanage.

" You know we have in Borsad two Orphanages for girls, and these are my special charge, but, owing to our short-handedness, I have to put my hand to a good deal else as well. . . . It hurts one so to see work undone, not work that MIGHT be done : I don't refer to that, but work that is lying there and OUGHT to be done.

" In the two Girls' Orphanages I have charge of about 170 girls. To train these girls in all ways is my happy work. With the above, the day is well filled, but I always try to have some leisure time to play and romp with the little ones, and time to give to the bigger ones if they want a talk on spiritual matters. I'm a methodical kind of a body, and my temptation would be to have all the day mapped out and occupied, and then perhaps some poor timid child would get no chance of unburdening her heart to me. To prevent this, I do reserve some special time. The girls know that at this time I am at leisure, and that they are free to come to me about anything. It is then that our talks mostly take place. Perhaps a girl comes

in and says : ' Please, will you sharpen my pencil ? ' or some such trivial thing as that, and, while sharpening the pencil, perhaps I make a few remarks, and so the girl gets a chance for a talk about something she has in her mind, and that all the time was the object of her visit, and not the pencil point ! "

These extracts from letters written at various times give one some idea, albeit an inadequate one, of what her presence there meant to those scores of girls, soon to be the mothers of the Gujarati Church and to her fellow-workers. Three or four points specially stand out with special clearness in the portrait.

First comes her happy disposition. Happiness was not only natural to her, but she regarded it as the duty and privilege of the disciples of Him who said that we should have His own joy in us ; and accordingly she would take immense trouble to cheer up anyone who seemed depressed, never content to leave them until she could proudly say : " I made them laugh at last ! " Indeed the Indian Christians distinguished her as the " Missi Saheb, who was always laughing."

Yet, with all this intense sense of humour and exuberance of spirits, one never heard of her saying a single word that could give a moment's pain, and when the conversation turned on people who were absent, she was most punctilious in avoiding anything that might savour of unkind criticism.

She possessed the secret of being able to give real friendship to her Indian sisters without any suspicion of con-

descension, as one may see from the letters she wrote every week, without fail, after leaving Borsad, to the Matron of the Girls' Orphanage there, and continued to write even after she had returned to other work in India. She had a great belief in the power of friendship for good or evil, and would take great pains to see that her girls and others in whom she was interested formed helpful and suitable friendships.

Her thoroughness has already been mentioned: the Indian Christians liked to boast that she spoke better Gujarati than they themselves did, and even corrected their mistakes. Even when she was giving a course of instruction on a subject she was quite familiar with, she would not be content without re-writing all the notes that she possessed, and the character sketches in which she summed up each of the kings of Judah and Israel in a line or two of Gujarati are unique. It is said that she had read the Bible through thirteen times in Gujarati during her Mission life.

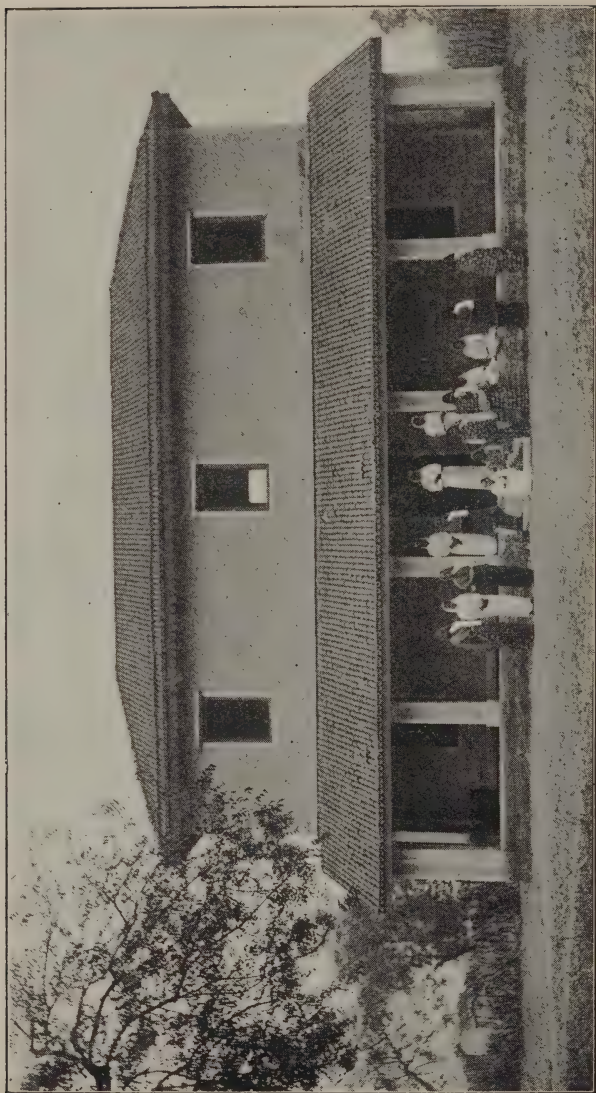
Her time at Borsad came to an end at the close of 1909, and she spent the greater part of 1910 at home on furlough. When she returned, it was to take up even more important work than any she had yet had—the charge of the newly started Mission Girls' Training College for Teachers at Ahmadabad.

CHAPTER IV. AHMADABAD.

THERE are few more important aspects of Mission work in India than those relating to the education of women.

The opposition to Christianity remains in the home among the women long after it has vanished from the men's side of the house. Hence one of the most essential things to secure is that the girls of the country shall come under the influences of a Christian education. If girls' schools are to be multiplied properly trained teachers are required, and no greater work can be conceived than the training of the teachers, who are to bring Christ into the hearts of the future mothers of the country, and through them into the hearts of their children also.

The Irish Mission had for a number of years taken advantage of the efficient Government training school for girls at Ahmadabad, known as the Mahalakshmi Female Training College. The Christian girls lived in a hostel, under the devoted care of Mrs. Taylor (wife of the Rev. G. P. Taylor, D.D., Principal of Stevenson Divinity College), who for many years had been to them a true mother, and freely placed all the gifts of her remarkable genius at their disposal, adding her private coaching to the instruction the girls received in the College with the happiest effect on their efficiency. But in due course the gradual failure of Mrs. Taylor's health, together with the growing numbers of girls, necessitated the attempt on the part of the Mission to establish a training school of its own, and to this proposal Government gave a cordial approval and the promise of all reasonable assistance.



"THE HOSTEL."

When it came to the question of who should be put in charge of this important work, it seemed to all as if Miss Steen had been expressly made for just this post.

Going to Ahmadabad was certainly not her own choice. She had been so happy in Borsad, and become so much a part of the life of the place, that nothing would have pleased her better than to return to her girls there. "How I shall miss the children!" was her first thought. But she never put her own individual preferences into the scale against the opinion of those qualified to judge, and was always ready to go where she was sent. Miss Steen never regarded herself as fit for so important a post as that of Principal of the Training College—she was far too humble; but, finding that everyone was unanimous in regarding her as the right person, she loyally accepted the responsibility and work given her, and it was not long before she became so engrossed in it that even Borsad could not have tempted her away.

Here are some of her first impressions of her new station :

"Ahmadabad is a big city, in many ways a contrast to Borsad and Anand. We are half an hour's drive from the railway station. On our way to the station, we come to the Mission High School for boys, our nice Mission Church, and one of the Mission bungalows, where Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie live at present. Out here, which is further from the station, there is our house, where Miss Scroggie and Miss Macauley and I live, a girls' orphanage, which Miss Scroggie looks after, and the hostel where my family are. Then we have, next door to us, another Mission bungalow,

where Dr. and Mrs. Taylor live, and beyond that the Stevenson College is being built. . . .

"On the Saturday after Christmas, 1910, I entered on my duties at the hostel. When the girls first came back I was busy arranging their bedrooms and bedding. Then on Sunday I had a Scripture class with them, and on Monday ordinary school began. In the class for which I am responsible there are 24 girls, who look forward to being teachers. Besides that, there are 17 other girls in the hostel who go to the Government College in the city. Perhaps in future we may ourselves teach all the girls, but at present it is only the first year students that we are teaching; second and third year students attend the Government College. The girls are all very good and happy and easily managed.

"I spend nearly all my day in the hostel: it is just a stone's throw from our house. I have a little room in the hostel for my own special use, where I have Scripture classes. Ordinary lesson classes are held in the school-room. The girls' sleeping-rooms are upstairs, and downstairs are the class-rooms; then round the house downstairs there is a verandah, where the girls have their meals. My writing-table is placed so that I can see all that goes on in the two class-rooms. The doors, of course, are always wide open, so the girls can come to me at any time they like."

A few months later, the end of the first term, she writes:

"These last days we've been very busy with examinations, the girls working from 6-30 to 11 a.m., and the teacher and I correcting from 11 a.m. till evening. We

try to correct each day's papers before the next day's are in our hands. One always feels in teaching and training these girls that the examination is of little moment, and that what they *are* is the important thing. I know the girls in the class and their capabilities so well that in a way there is no great need for an examination, but the girls love it, and would have felt something very important had been left out if we had not had it.

"We have 42 girls living in the hostel. All the girls study Scripture with me from 8-9 a.m. The course for this year is the Acts of the Apostles, the Women of the Bible, and the Shorter Catechism. Mrs. Taylor gave me some splendid notes on Acts and on the Women of the Bible. They are a great help. We learn not only about the important characters, but the obscure ones, whose names are unfamiliar. The girls work very well at Scripture, and are greatly interested in what they learn. Sometimes at the Government College. if they haven't done so well as they should in some of their secular subjects, the masters ask them is it because they study Scripture so much at home that they have no time for ordinary subjects ?

"After the Scripture class, the girls have their morning meal, and then get ready for College. About ten o'clock those who attend the Government College start off with the matron, and the first-year class take their places in the school-room here at 10-30. They study the ordinary school subjects, and, in addition, learn how these subjects are to be taught to others. The Orphanage School is our practising school, and a few girls go over every day to practise teaching. Twice a week the girls in turn give an

oral lesson before their fellow-students and before the teachers. I should think this rather an ordeal myself, but, on the whole, the girls don't seem to find it too difficult, and have made a good start at it. After the oral lesson, all who have listened criticize the young teacher, and, from the first, I have been surprised at their excellent criticisms."

The first year's work showed such excellent results that the Zenana Mission Council had no hesitation about adding a second-year's class, and this, of course, greatly increased the work of the Lady Superintendent, and also greatly added to her interest and pride in the work. In November, 1911, she writes :—

"We are very crowded in our present quarters, but we have got plans drawn out for considerable enlargement.

"The new girls who have just come in seem a nice set. It takes them a little while to get into the ways of a new place, but one can see they are all trying their very best.

"I don't think you have any idea how really good many of these girls are. Lately, on a Saturday at mid-day, I went into the class-room, where some of the girls were sitting doing some preparation ; in a corner by herself, with her head down on the desk, sat a girl. I thought she was asleep, so I said, 'Why is she sleeping there?' The girl whom I thought asleep never looked up, but another girl said, 'She's not asleep, she's praying.' The other day I went up to the dormitory about 10-15 a.m., just before school, to see that everything was tidy, and, kneeling at her bedside, was a girl whose lips were moving. Like Hannah, she was evidently pouring out her soul before

the Lord. I slipped away, and I don't think she knew any-one had seen her or come near her.

"That same girl (she is one of our new ones) asked me yesterday if she might go upstairs every day at school recess time. They are not supposed to go upstairs during school hours without permission. I gave her leave to go any day she liked. I didn't ask any questions, but I feel sure she is going up at that hour to have a little quiet time with her Lord."

In the last letter from her pen that found its way into Woman's Work we can see her growing enthusiasm for the girls under her care :—

"Indian girls seem to love examinations ; and, even though they *sometimes* lose their heads, or write arrant rubbish, still they love exams, and remain quite cheerful. Their annual examination is held in November, and lasts about a fortnight, so it is well they keep bright through it all. I expect I was really more excited than they about the papers, and certainly I wasn't so cheerful as they when they told me some of their answers. However, for our first year (of our College, I mean) we didn't do too badly, and out of 19 girls 16 passed. Of the 16 who passed, I was really sorry about one of them, for she just got through, and no more, and I don't think she is at all fit for the second year's course. . . . I felt quite satisfied about the remaining 15 that they had done an honest year's work, and were ready for promotion. Of the three who failed, I was more than satisfied that one should fail, as she was not a good, steady student. . . . But I was very sorry about the other two dears who failed ;

they are not clever, but they are both good, steady, attentive girls, who really deserved to pass. Our girls did specially well in arithmetic and method of teaching, and were also praised for their bright manner in the oral part of their examination, *i.e.*, in teaching a class on a given subject before the examiners."

CHAPTER V. THE END.

THUS by 1912 the new Training College was well on its way to completeness and success. But early in September those who knew Miss Steen intimately were concerned to note a weariness and strain that was altogether foreign to one who hardly knew what it was to be ill. She tried to fight against what she supposed to be laziness, but was induced to go to bed in the hope that a few days' rest would make her all right again. Alas ! the news soon went round that she was down with enteric ; but, considering her strong constitution, it was hoped that, with care, she would pass safely through the various stages of the disease, as in fact no less than three of her fellow-workers in the Mission did that very year. She had every attention and the unfailing kindness and skill of one of the ablest doctors in that part of India, while her sister, herself a trained nurse, came from Nagpur to help to look after her ; but just when we hoped she was beginning to improve, on the 24th of September came the news that she was dead. She was buried next day in a little corner of the Ahmadabad Cemetery, where already a number of her fellow-missionaries had been laid to rest, and we began by degrees to

realize that the work of the Zenana Mission in Gujarat must now go on without the help and counsel of one who seemed indispensable.

It may be worth inquiring what it was in her that gave her the quite unique position of influence and authority she possessed both among Indians and foreigners. Perhaps it was that rare combination of strength of character with humility, of brightness and laughter with intense spirituality and great practical wisdom which is, but seldom, found in such perfect proportion in a single nature. To this one can attribute much of her success in her work ; but to this surely, too, that she gave her whole strength and soul to the work she was given to do, so that a dozen years of comparatively monotonous and humdrum work, the elementary teaching and training of a number of Indian country girls, many of them physically and mentally weakened by famine, were for her, and through her for others, invested with the joy and fascination of adventure and romance, which only those know who have the opportunity of serving God on the Mission field.

It made her study the language, for instance, to such purpose that few foreigners have ever known it better, so that "it had almost ceased to be a foreign language at all to her : she thought in it, and used it with a freedom and a grasp of idiom that most of us envied. But this was not merely because she had a gift for languages, but because she took infinite pains. She did not cease, after passing the prescribed language examinations, to give time and labour daily to the serious study of Gujarati, and for

many years, if not, indeed, practically during the whole of her time in India, she studied with a native teacher.

Two things stand out specially in her friends' recollections of her : one was the impression they received that to her the promise had been specially fulfilled of life more abundant, and the other, that she had in a wonderful degree the experience of the joy of Christ fulfilled in her. "She was like sunshine breaking out on a dull day," writes a friend who had been with her on a hill holiday. "One evening especially, when the mists kept us in, she was brimming over with merriment. Our disappointment was forgotten, and we had such a happy evening. The hour came for worship, and she conducted it—very simply and earnestly. She had been our leader in fun all the evening, but there was not the slightest feeling of incongruity as she led us into the very presence of the Saviour and pled for spiritual blessings."

Such a life was not a thing of hap-hazard ; it did not simply come naturally to her, but was nourished and fed by the Lord, the Life-giver, and she took pains to secure that nourishment. "I remember," says her sister, speaking of visits to her when she was hard at work, "how her lamp used to burn far into the night, and again she would be up early in the morning. I used to remonstrate with her, and tell her that she didn't take enough sleep, . . . and I really didn't know exactly when she went to bed nor when she got up, but I knew that she made sure of having time for study of God's word and time for prayer in the quiet of the night and in the early morning, and then she was ready and equipped, as only one can be who

comes straight from the presence of God, for the day's work and whatever it might bring to her."

"The first little address," writes a cousin, "I ever heard her give, before she had trained for foreign work, and when we were quite young, was on the kind of workers God wants:—(1) willing-hearted, (2) wise-hearted, (3) whole-hearted." Could anything more tersely express the ideal she fulfilled in her own life? No wonder that the writer adds:—"To all of us who have known and loved her, her life is for ever an inspiration."

And if anyone should be tempted to think that so delightful a nature and such rare gifts were thrown away on the humdrum routine of Mission work in India, and ask, "To what purpose was this waste?" one may well reply, as she herself would have loved to do "that no earthly career can be compared for happiness and fruitfulness with the tremendous honour of being allowed to be an ambassador of Christ to the Gentiles." And her fellow-missionaries, who miss her, and will continue to miss her sorely, would gladly testify that from the outpouring of this beautiful life the whole Mission has been filled with the odour of the ointment.

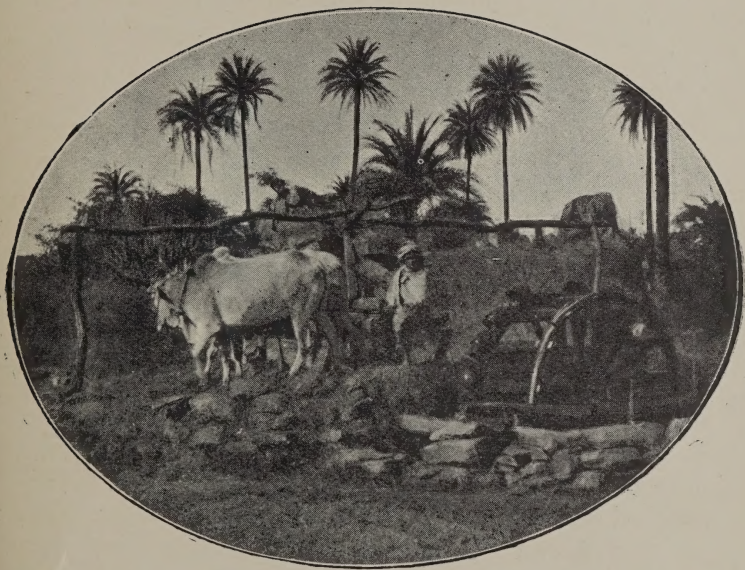
Rev. J. T. Horsburgh, M.A., says :—

If our Master returned to-day to find millions of people unevangelized, and looked, as of course He would look, to *us* for an explanation, I cannot imagine what explanation we should have to give.

Of one thing I am certain—that most of the excuses we are accustomed to make with such a good conscience *now* we should be wholly ashamed of *then*.

We talk of our Home Heathen. But really they are not Heathen here in England. I know something about them. I have worked amongst them. Indifferent, godless, wicked—more wicked, perhaps, than many Heathen—I know they are. BUT THEY ARE NOT HEATHEN.

Our Home Heathen—when they pass a Church or a Chapel in the street, and hear the bells ring, do they look up, and gaze, and wonder, “Whatever is this big building? What are bells ringing for? Why are people going inside?” They know perfectly well, of course, what the building is, and why the people are going in. Oh, yes, *here* there is a Saviour for the wickedest people, *and they know it*. *There* there is no Saviour for anybody *that they know of*. *Here* they can hear if they will. *There* they CANNOT hear. And *here* they do not worship sticks, and mud, and stones as they do *there*. Besides, supposing England *were* a Heathen country (it might have been if St. Augustine and others had thought only about *their* “Heathen at Home!”), why should *thousands* of Christians stay in this one tiny corner, and only *units* go to the vast other regions of God’s world? Do answer—*Why should they?* And ask yourself—*Why should I stay here?* Why should I NOT go *there*?



THE VILLAGE WELL.

